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RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0120
RUEHAN/AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO PRIORITY 0003
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3715
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0038
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 0178
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0768
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY 0107
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY 0070
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1413
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA PRIORITY 0018
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0035
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SUBJECT: CHINA WANTS TO LEAD INTERNATIONAL FIGHT ON SOMALI
PIRATES

Classified By: Acting Consul General Christopher Marut for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On November 13, at a well-attended private sector-organized International Piracy Conference, senior Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy officers stated China was committed to deploying its fleet to the Horn of Africa (HOA) until the region was stable and secure. They urged greater international cooperation in combating maritime piracy, in line with Beijing's official request in early November to co-lead multinational anti-piracy coordination efforts in Bahrain, known as SHADE (Shared Awareness and Deconfliction). European officials speaking at the conference announced China would soon be alternating SHADE leadership with the EU, NATO, and Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), described changing pirate tactics, and warned the Somali piracy problem was quickly evolving into an Indian Ocean problem, threatening vital Europe-Asia sea lanes. Conference attendees strongly opposed the arming of merchant ships and called for a stronger international naval force presence. END SUMMARY

China Urges Cooperation on Piracy Fight; Wants to Lead

12. (SBU) Speaking at the inaugural International Piracy Conference in Hong Kong on November 13, Senior Captain Hu Gang Feng, the Beijing-based PLA Deputy Director of Naval Bureau, Operations Department of General Staff Headquarters, and Commander Liang Wei, Deputy Chief of Operations for the PLA Navy's South Sea Fleet, explained China would commit its naval resources to Somali anti-piracy operations and fulfill its international obligations until security and stability was brought to the region. The conference, co-hosted by Hong

Kong's branch of the Nautical Institute (NI) and the Hong Kong Ship Owners Association (HKSOA), was attended by over 140 members of Hong Kong's maritime industry, including ship owners, managers, financiers, lawyers, insurers, and suppliers, as well as a large press corps. The high level of attendance can be explained in part by timing, coming just two days after Hong Kong-flagged oil tanker, the BW Lion, escaped a two-hour Somali pirate attack 1,000 nautical miles east of Mogadishu, and coinciding with ongoing negotiations for the release of the hijacked Chinese ship De Xin Hai and its crew of 25 on October 19.

13. (SBU) Since December 2008, China has deployed four warship contingents of three-vessels each to Somali waters, the latest of which arrived November 13. As of November 11, China had assisted 1,110 merchant ships along the Gulf of Aden (GOA) and the Somali Basin (SB) through convoy escorts, security patrols, and the onboard deployment of special tactical units on some Chinese-flagged vessels, Hu reported. For his part, Liang stated that China would send two to three additional contingents to the HOA this year and that the pirate situation would dictate the tempo of future deployment. Liang added China was committed and had the capabilities to protect its merchant fleet but would like to enhance international cooperation and bring multiplier effects to regional peace and security efforts, while also benefiting from unprecedented multinational participation.

14. (SBU) Hu deployed with the second PLA contingent to Somali

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waters from April to August and recommended greater intelligence sharing among international navies on piracy activity and methods, as well as sharing naval tactics and capabilities between members of the international naval security and escort force. Hu's recommendation echoed a November 10 official request by Beijing authorities to allow it to co-lead monthly anti-piracy meetings in Bahrain. The monthly SHADE meetings serve to coordinate and plan deployments for the over 40 navies participating in anti-piracy activities off the Somali coast. The EU, NATO, and CMF currently rotate SHADE's leadership role.

SHADE Welcomes Opportunity to Collaborate with China

15. (SBU) Royal Navy Commodore Timothy Lowe, Deputy Commander for CMF, briefed attendees on increased pirate activity far beyond the GOA and the SB since August 2008. Pirates were changing tactics, he said, to employ "mother" ships in support of smaller assault skiffs, allowing them to move away from the coast. Lowe lamented that the counter-piracy navies had limited assets to patrol such an expansive area and were constantly pulled away for other regional missions, such as countering drug and human trafficking, terrorism, or to pursue individual mandates, such as the EU's protection of World Food Program (WFP) shipping and ad-hoc protection of national merchant vessels by their countries' navies. Lowe announced the additional commitment of naval assets by the EU, Russia, Malaysia, Iran, and India, and welcomed China's recent request to join international coordination efforts.

16. (C) Noting China would undoubtedly join SHADE "in the very near future," Commodore Lowe confided to EconOff at the end of the conference the challenges faced during the early November meetings he attended in Beijing, when China officially made its request to join. His frustration emanated from what he described was the Chinese military leaders' unwillingness to or unfamiliarity with "compromise." However, Lowe and a large number of conference attendees expressed "surprise" at the ease and confidence with which Senior Captain Hu and Commander Liang addressed participants and the media throughout the conference, including a one-hour panel discussion, perhaps an indication that PLA officials are slowly embracing the notion of multinational cooperation.

Somali Piracy Evolving into Indian Ocean Piracy

¶7. (SBU) Mr. Simon Church, Industry Liaison Officer for the Marine Security Center, Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR), warned attendees that the piracy threat off Somali waters was quickly spreading to the vital Europe-Asia sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. He cited the recent attack on the BW Lion close to the distant Seychelles islands and an up-tick in pirate activity near the Indian coast, beyond the 62nd meridian East. He attributed the long range attacks to calmer seas as the monsoon season came to a close and to the presence of pirate "mother" ships in the area. Church endorsed existing maritime industry Best Management Practices (BMP) to deter piracy, such as (1) enhancing ship perimeter defenses with high pressure water hoses, barbed wire, netting, and sandbags; (2) deploying

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watch officers around the clock; (3) training in evasive sea maneuvering techniques; and (4) communicating with the United Kingdom's Maritime Trade Office (UKMTO) in Dubai when transiting these waters.

Law Enforcement on the Money Trail

¶8. (SBU) Hong Kong Police Superintendent Lawrence Wong, seconded as team leader to INTERPOL's Criminal Organizations and Violent Crime Unit in Lyon, France, explained the organization's involvement in the fight against Somali piracy, a cross border crime. Wong introduced INTERPOL's maritime anti-piracy Project Bada (Korean word for ocean) and announced the INTERPOL Global Conference on Maritime Piracy Financial Investigations to be held early next year in Lyon. The conference would look at topics such as the global money trail of piracy operations, money laundering, asset recovery, and known piracy financing methods.

¶9. (C) Privately, Wong expressed frustration with the international community's reluctance to prosecute pirates outside the Horn of Africa, the lack of law enforcement capacity in the African region, and the slow pace of judicial courts in the few regional countries willing to prosecute these crimes. He said that at present, the Somali pirates' "business model" was one of high profit returns and little operational risk, which would continue to pose challenges on the high seas unless law and order improved in Somali shores.

If there were evidence that ransom payments were supporting Somalia's civil war or terrorist activity, the industry and military would be forced to change the way they dealt with piracy, said Wong. To date, however, available evidence did not suggest such linkages.

Arms on Ships Do Not Ensure Safety of Crews

¶10. (SBU) Attendees were unified in their strong opposition to arming merchant ships to combat piracy. Captain Li Chi-wai, Hong Kong Seamen's Union Chairman, stated seafarers were not soldiers and lacked weapons training. Instead, Li hoped international navies would form a United Nations force to establish safe trade corridors while simultaneously pursuing and disabling pirate "mother" ships active in the region. Hong Kong's Marine Department Director Roger Tupper opposed the use of armed private security guards on ships but welcomed military escorts with clear training on rules of engagement. However, their employment should only be temporary while the international community dealt with the current limitations of reduced naval patrolling assets, ineffective regional law enforcement and judicial courts, and Somalia's internal conflict. Father Stephen Miller, Managing

Director for Anglican Church-rooted Mission to Seafarers at the Dubai International Seafarers Centre, argued arming merchant crews would not provide a solution to the piracy problem nor would it make crews any safer. Rather, such measures would lead to a more violent escalation of the problem. Father Miller encouraged ship owners and managers to invest in BMP and train crews at evasive techniques.

MARUT